

UNODC IN SOUTH ASIA: UNODC helps countries and its people to reduce illegal drugs and crime throughout the world and address justice and human security issues. It helps Member States with technical assistance, legal advice and research within the framework of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) and its three Protocols, the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and the three UN Conventions on Drugs.

UNODC South Asia is present in Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka: Technical support for anti corruption work



The United Nations Convention Against Corruption entered into force in 2005. 136 countries have ratified the convention and thus committed to address corruption in their societies. Countries in the South Asia region have signed this convention. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives have already ratified it. As a guardian of UNCAC, UNODC provides practical assistance and capacity building to develop anti-

corruption policies and institutions together with Governments and the civil society. UNODC undertook a mission to Colombo, Sri Lanka in October 2009 to extend technical cooperation to the Government of Sri Lanka, in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A two day workshop on legal and institutional gap analysis exercise was initiated. Officials from the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) and from the Attorney General's office learnt to use the various tools and applied the interactive self assessment checklist developed by UNODC. As a next step, UNODC will continue to provide technical support to complete the gap analysis within three months.

India: Pharmaceutical abuse a growing concern

Pharmaceutical drug abuse is increasing in South Asia, particularly India. This is because of their affordability and easy availability at retail outlets. They are often used as substitutes by drug users. The problem gets magnified when drug users begin to inject them through unsafe means. This increases the risks of HIV, AIDS and hepatitis C transmission. Pharmaceuticals like buprenorphine, diazepam, nitrazepam, codeine based cough syrups and phenergan are some of the commonly abused pharmaceuticals in India. The larger issue is inadequacies in implementation of the existing laws and regulations that vary from one country to another. UNODC and the Government of India organized a seminar in New Delhi, India on 18 November 2009 at the National Academy of Customs, Excise and Narcotics (NACEN). State Drug Controllers of the Northern and Eastern states of India besides other law enforcement agencies participated to identify legal, regulatory and enforcement gaps in addressing pharmaceutical abuse.

One of the injecting drug user (IDU), a migrant from the North of India, is getting his abscess treated at a government supported oral substitution centre in New Delhi, India. He shares, "I don't inject heroin or use smack anymore since they are expensive and hard to get. It is easier and cheaper for me to buy pharmaceuticals like tidigesic, avil, diazepam from retail outlets and inject them. No prescription is needed and they usually cost between Rs. 15 to Rs. 50 (US\$ 0.3 to US\$ 1) per fix."



South Asia: Precursor control

South Asia is close to two of the world's largest heroin producing regions. Heroin is smuggled into and trafficked through South Asia. Precursor chemicals, used for the illicit manufacture of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS) drugs, are also diverted from licit trade within the region. UNODC implements a regional project to strengthen precursor chemical control through law enforcement agencies in seven SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

In 2009, UNODC conducted an evaluation of its precursor control project in the region. The main findings and recommendations are:

- Countries in the region need to reinforce existing precursor control mechanisms
- The chemical trade and industry need to strengthen cooperation with law enforcement agencies
- Drug law enforcement personnel need to be trained in investigative and operational skills
- Laboratories need to be better equipped for forensic analysis of precursors

UNODC INTERNAL NEWS CORNER

Moving on: Ashita Mittal appointed as Deputy Representative at UNODC Afghanistan in Kabul



On 29 October 2009, the UNODC Regional Office for South Asia bid farewell to Ms. Ashita Mittal, who has been working for UNODC since 1995. Since entering UNODC, Ashita has been working as National Programme Officer and

Deputy Representative at the UNODC Office in New Delhi, which covers six countries of South Asia. In 2009, Ashita took the challenge and applied for an international position as Deputy Representative at the UNODC office in Kabul, Afghanistan. Before her departure, Ashita reflects on her time with UNODC: "My work with UNODC was both challenging and rewarding in the South Asia development context. After a steep learning curve, I have learned how to provide technical assistance when required, respond to needs quickly and program sustainable and cost effective initiatives that bring all stakeholders together". Now, after having been appointed in her new position, she is eager to learn from the talented team in Afghanistan. "I feel privileged, that being a woman, I was chosen to overlook programmes and work in a hardship post." says Ashita.

The UNODC ROSA team wishes Ashita success in her new life at a very challenging duty station.